

SENATE

PUBLIC HEALTH, WELFARE & SAFETY

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Bill No. 2021 Eleventh Avenue  
Suite 1  
Helena, Montana  
59601-4890

SB 7



1.406.443.4000  
FAX 1.406.443.4042  
Intrastate Toll Free  
1.877.443.4000  
[www.mmaoffice.org](http://www.mmaoffice.org)  
[mma@mmaoffice.org](mailto:mma@mmaoffice.org)

TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF SENATE BILL 7  
SENATE COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC HEALTH, WELFARE, AND SAFETY  
JANUARY 7, 2015

Chairman Thomas and Committee members:

I am Bill Gallea, an Emergency Physician practicing in Helena, and Vice-President of the Montana Medical Association speaking in support of Senate Bill 7.

The Montana Prescription Drug Registry has become an established, invaluable tool in medical practice as we providers of health care work to treat pain effectively and safely, yet at the same time endeavor to stem the tide of prescription drug abuse. The Registry has been operational for over two years, supported by a Harold Rogers grant plus a \$15 fee paid by prescribers and dispensers of controlled substances. While the Registry has proven useful, perhaps even indispensable, it is functioning at a basic level and would be an even better tool if a number of identified enhancements were implemented. These include the ability to delegate Registry access to our support staff, the ability to share information with other states, having the data be immediately entered into the Registry, providing feedback directly to prescribers, and making possible the analysis of the data contained in the Registry to better understand where we stand and what progress we are making in addressing the epidemic of prescription drug abuse. The implementation of these identified enhancements has been much slower than providers have wanted and has been hampered by limited staff and dollars devoted to this goal.

When the Montana Medical Association addressed the proposal from the Department of Labor and Industry to raise the fee to \$30 our membership stepped up and said: "we will happily pay more for an improved product." So our support for the increase in fee is accompanied by a caveat. We propose that the extra income that will be provided by doubling the annual fee must be committed to accelerating the accomplishment of the identified enhancements. It is anticipated that the grant will continue for at least another cycle of 18 months. Thus the MMA believes that with the increased income resulting from the increased fee the Legislature should expect that the most important enhancements to the Registry will be realized by the next session.

That is the reason we support the sunset provision in SB 7: so that the effectiveness of the increased fee in funding the necessary improvements to the Registry can be reassessed in a timely manner.

Thank you for listening. I will stay through the hearing to answer any questions.